

Welsh Assembly Government & West Wales UAV Centre



By Paul Cremin

Previously, the aspirations of those behind ParcAberporth and the West Wales UAV Centre have been laid bare for all to read: the creation of a complete offering in Europe, capable of supporting, sustaining and delivering bespoke services to the UAS sector - the Wales UAS Environment. The enhancement of airfield infrastructure, the developments and work packages that would be accelerated to support UAS operations and the pursuit of new airspace areas, dedicated to UAS operations were some of the plans mooted to both support and stimulate the UK's ability to nurture a burgeoning sector.

There were bold statements of intent and there were references to programmes of work that were expected to be hosted or supported at the UK location. It was touted that new airspace would be designed, the regulators engaged and submissions made to national bodies for the establishment of new areas for flying operations; over land, sea and littoral areas. Private money was to be spent, regional government support was evident and a will to 'make it happen' drove the stakeholders forward.

It is pleasing, therefore, to briefly outline the progress made to date, the services being delivered or made ready to meet the evolving industry needs:

- Runway extension to accommodate larger UAS operations and to support the airport as a regional hub for European access - check.
 - Through accelerated investment plans, West Wales Airport now boasts over 1200 metres of runway (1199m declared for commercial operations), not to mention several grass strips and other areas all available for UAS operations.
- Flying operations of civil UAS - check.
 - Various organisations have made use of the facilities through the West Wales UAV Centre with over land and over sea operations being conducted.
- Establishment of the main UK MOD UAS programme - check.
 - The MOD Watchkeeper programme is now based at ParcAberporth as it looks to progress its development

prior to entry into full service; again, operations and service provisions are managed through the West Wales UAV Centre.

- Integration of manned and unmanned operations - check.
 - The tried, tested and Civil Aviation Authority-accepted UAS operations manual remains West Wales Airport's enabler to successfully hosting all types of movements.
- Completion and submission of an Airspace Change Proposal to the National Aviation Authority to establish dedicated, segregated airspace for UAS operations - check.
 - Sponsored by the Welsh Assembly Government, developed and delivered by QinetiQ, this proposal lays the groundwork for the final pieces of the ParcAberporth jigsaw.

The list goes on, but you get the message - ParcAberporth is delivering on a promise made in 2006 to develop, support and maintain a UK capability for UAS testing, development and training. A safe, regulated and managed capability available to all users, operators or manufacturers.

Through the West Wales UAV Centre (www.wwuavc.com), the teaming between West Wales Airport and QinetiQ, robust yet flexible procedures, protocols, accommodation and support packages are available to enable routine UAS operation. The continued support from the Welsh Assembly Government means that companies have access to regional funding and support packages, tailored to specific needs.

Looking forward, as well as finalising the details for the submitted airspace development proposal, the establishment and support of other operations at ParcAberporth are hoped to be reported. In fact, based on current enquiry levels, it is hoped that this page will be used to discuss UAS programme developments undertaken and how ParcAberporth has proved itself as a key enabler to the UAS industry.

ParcAberporth and the West Wales UAV Centre - now delivering services for routine UAS operations.